

## CHAPTER VI - LAND USE

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### INTRODUCTION

Population growth, housing needs, economic trends, and the regulatory environment have resulted in direct changes to the Hudson landscape. The Town's existing natural features, roadways, and built environment are the foundation for future development and conservation efforts. This chapter discusses 1) historic development patterns; 2) an analysis of developed land and existing land uses, including residential, recreational, commercial, industrial and agricultural land uses; 3) and analysis of undeveloped land and Hudson's existing zoning districts.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Hudson, with an area of 29.2 square miles, is the sixth-largest municipality in the Nashua region and has the second-highest population density in the region (see Chapter II). Hudson has grown dramatically over the past few decades both as a bedroom community for Nashua and employment centers in Massachusetts as well as a center of employment in its own right. By the close of the 19th Century, most of Hudson's 1,200 residents were concentrated in the vicinity of the Taylor's Falls Bridge area. The remainder of the population was located in the old Hudson Center area on NH 111, on fertile farmlands along the Merrimack River, scattered along major roadways and on more isolated farmsteads throughout what was an overwhelmingly rural community. The Town's commercial uses were few and



Above: Aerial Photo of Sagamore Bridge Area

tended to be interspersed with residences to serve the local needs of a non-automobile-oriented society. In rural areas, non-residential uses included farms as well as traditional rural industries such as sawmills, cooperages, inns, and taverns. As the 20th Century progressed, fundamental technological, economic, and social changes took place which would forever alter the landscape in all the region's communities. Hudson, however, developed differently than most.

After World War II, most rural communities confronted development by becoming increasingly residential in character. Hudson, however, welcomed commercial and industrial growth along with residential development even though the Town had not historically been an

employment center. Furthermore, although the Town's population grew rapidly, most housing development corresponded with the extension of public water and sewer which resulted in higher density residential development that was reasonably contained to the central and western portions of Town. As a result, much of the eastern portion of the Town has continued to be rural in character. With development of the Sagamore Bridge in south Hudson and improvements to the Town's highway

network (see photo above), commercial development sprawled along major routes such as Lowell Road (NH 3A), Derry Street (NH 102) and Central Street (NH 111). Industrial areas also developed which include some of the region’s largest employers such as Digital Equipment Corporation and Sanders Associates (now known as BAE Systems). The Town’s commercial, industrial and residential development, however, consumed most of its rich productive farmland, some of which was located along the Merrimack River.

## EXISTING LAND USE

The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) maintains a Geographic Information System (GIS) database for generalized land use in Hudson based on data provided by the Town of Hudson Assessor. This GIS database is a general representation of how land is being used and is broken down into various land use categories. The database is parcel specific: i.e., each property is assigned one use for the entire area of the property. These categories include Agricultural, Commercial, Four Family Residential, Group Quarters, Industrial, Institutional, Mixed-Use, Multi-Family Residential, Municipal Facility, Other Government, Permanent Open Space, Recreation, Road, Right-of-Way (ROW), School, Single Family Residential, Three Family Residential, Two Family Residential, Utility, Vacant and Water. The location of these categories is illustrated in Map VI-1 and the area of each category is shown in Table VI-1.

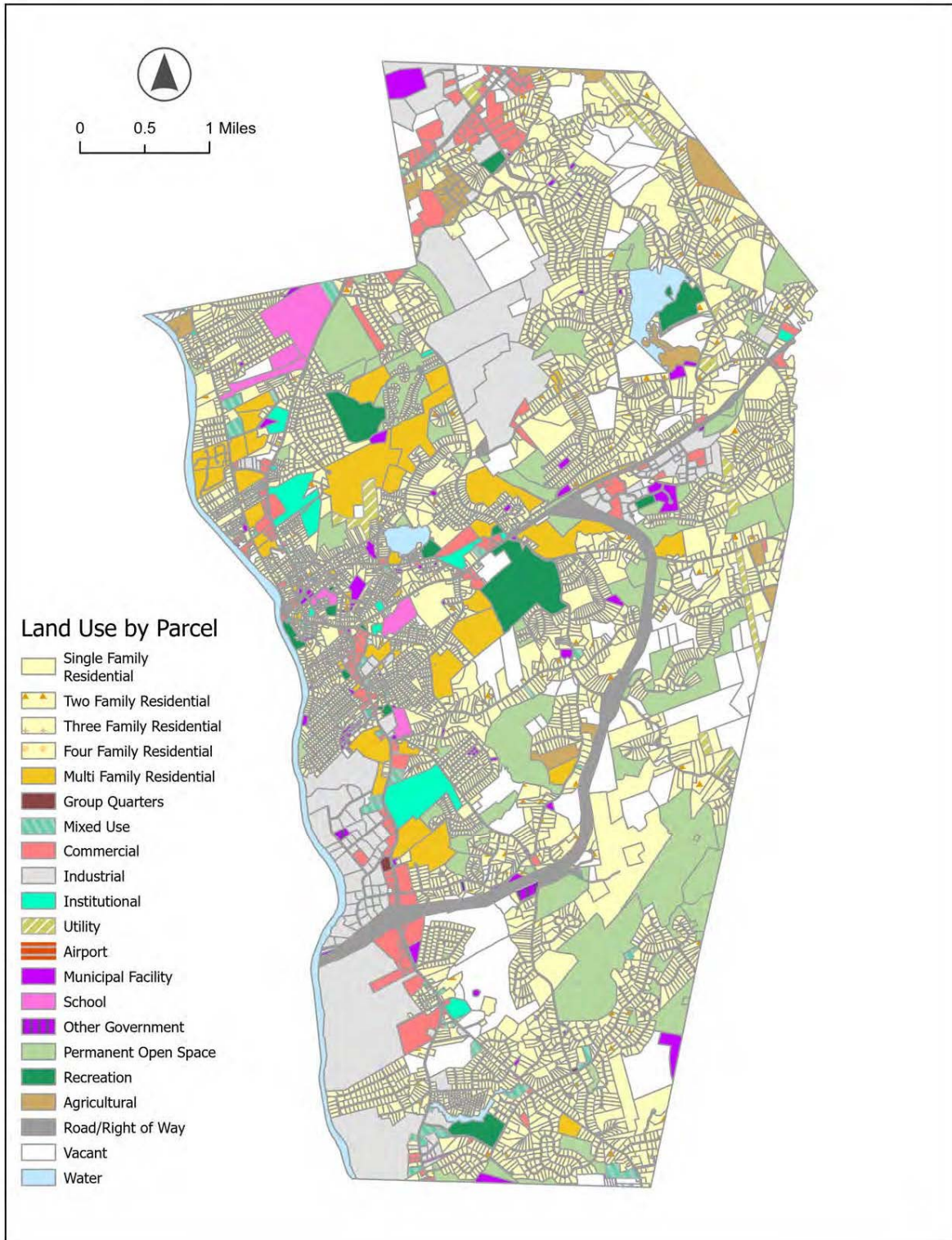
**Table VI-1. Area of Generalized Land Use Types in Hudson**

Land Use	Acres	% of total
Agricultural	231	1.23%
Commercial	588	3.13%
Four Family Residential	25	0.13%
Group Quarters	6	0.03%
Industrial	1864	9.93%
Institutional	235	1.25%
Mixed Use	144	0.77%
Multi Family Residential	919	4.90%
Municipal Facility	209	1.11%
Other Government	17	0.09%
Permanent Open Space	1893	10.09%
Recreation	373	1.99%
Road	1139	6.07%
ROW	290	1.55%
School	211	1.13%
Single Family Residential	7012	37.36%
Three Family Residential	55	0.29%
Two Family Residential	1069	5.70%
Utility	157	0.84%
Vacant	1934	10.31%
Water	395	2.11%

Source: 2023 NRPC GIS parcel database for land use

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Map VI-1. Existing Land Use Categories in Hudson, 2023



Source: 2023 NRPC GIS parcel database for land use

## ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPED LAND

### Agricultural

Agriculture is permitted in all of Hudson’s zoning districts. While approximately 2,186 acres of prime and statewide significant farmland soils can be found in Hudson, it is estimated that active agriculture uses encompass only about 231.2 acres, or about 1.23%, of Hudson’s total land area. Much of the former agricultural land in Hudson has been converted to other uses, particularly along the Merrimack River. The remaining agricultural land in Hudson includes several farms, including the Whispering Brook Farm, Living Legends Farm, Harmon Hill Farm, and the Smith Farm.

### Commercial

Commercial uses encompass about 588 acres, or 3%, of Hudson’s total land area. Of the 588 acres, there are about 2.54 million square feet of floor space and an average of around 4,400 square feet per acre (~10%). A pattern of low-density, strip development that prioritizes parking lots over buildings has characterized commercial development in Hudson. Because this development pattern is located along major arterials and at prominent intersections, it gives the appearance that business uses encompass far more of the Town’s land area than is actually the case but also, it strongly influences the perceived community character. The “strip development” style of commercial development may be attributed to the auto-oriented style of development pervasive since the 1950’s as well as geometry of the Business Zones along these corridors which is a 500-foot offset from the corridor while split-zoned parcels strictly as two distinct zones, resulting in a lot geometry conducive to strip development. Hudson’s most significant commercial areas are located along the NH 3A, NH 111 and NH 102 corridors. Under existing zoning, commercial uses are permitted in the Town’s Business District, General District, and General-1 District. A handful of commercial uses, such as restaurants, auto repair, and offices/professional services are also permitted in the Industrial District. Many commercial uses have also been developed in Residential Districts either before zoning was adopted in Hudson or through variances granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment. In 1994, the Town’s zoning district map was amended to rezone some of the larger commercial developments so that they would be within the Business District; however, the process of realigning the zoning district boundaries to reflect existing land use patterns is not yet complete.

### Residential

Residential is, by far, the largest land use category in Hudson, encompassing around 10,000 acres, or roughly 50%, of Hudson’s 18,767-acre total land area. Based on a 2020 total housing unit count of 7,653, residential uses are developed at an average density of approximately 1.3 units per acre.<sup>1</sup>

**Table VI- 2. Number of Residential Units by Type in Hudson**

Property Type	Number of Units	Total Acres
Single-family	5,686	6,051
Condos and Condexes	1,059	2,422
2 - Family	744	1,002
3+ Family	124	609
Manufactured Housing	40	163
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,653</b>	<b>10,247</b>

<sup>1</sup> All housing unit counts from Town of Hudson Assessing data.

Source: Hudson Assessing

Note: Acreage is slightly different than Table VI-1 due to variation in classifications.

### Single-Family Residential Use<sup>2</sup>

Most of Hudson's residential land use is comprised of single-family dwelling units. Single-family residential uses encompass about 5,686 acres, or 30%, of Hudson's 18,767-acre total land area. In April 2020, 74%, or 5,686 housing units, were single-family. Single-family residential uses are developed at an average density of approximately 1.2 units per acre.

### Condos and Condexes<sup>3</sup>

Condos and condexes are the second-largest residential land use in Hudson, following single-family. In April 2020, condos and condexes encompassed 2,422, or 12.9%, of Hudson's 18,767-acre total land area. Condos and condexes also make up 13.8% of the total housing units in Hudson.

### Two-Family (Duplex) Residential Use

Two-family, or duplex, residential uses encompass about 1,002 acres, or 5.3%, of Hudson's 18,767-acre total land area. In 2020, 9.7%, or 744 of the total housing units in Hudson are two-family.

### Multi-Family Residential Use<sup>4</sup>

Multi-family (3+ units per building) residential uses encompass approximately 609 acres, or 3.2%, of Hudson's 18,767-acre total land area. In April 2020, 1.6%, or 124, of the total housing units were considered multi-family.

### Manufactured Housing

Manufactured housing uses encompass approximately 163 acres, or 0.9%, of Hudson's 18,767-acre total land area. In April of 2020, 0.5%, or 40 units, were considered manufactured.

*Note: The housing land use statistics above are based on Hudson Assessing data.*

## Industrial

Industrial land uses are the third largest land use category in Hudson, encompassing about 1,864 acres or 9.93% of the Town. Of those 1,864 acres, there are, or planned to be, about 6.59 million square feet of floor space, averaging around 3,500 square feet of floor space per acre. As noted in Chapter IV, Economic Development, industry is an important component of Hudson's economy and of the region in general and many industrial uses tend to require large sites for their operations. Most of the Town's industrial uses are located between Lowell Road and the Merrimack River, on NH 102 near the Londonderry Town line and on NH 111. As with commercial uses, the General District and General-1 District also permit industrial uses.

## Institutional

Institutional uses include places of worship and privately owned cemeteries. Institutional uses encompass 235 acres, or 1.3%, of Hudson's total land area.

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<sup>2</sup> Single-family residential use includes accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and all other accessory living units

<sup>3</sup> Condex – a duplex style condominium (Hudson Assessing)

<sup>4</sup> Multi-Family Housing – Includes all buildings containing three or more housing units. As defined by the U.S. Census.

## Mixed-Use

Multiple or mixed uses on a single lot. Mixed-Use occupies 144 acres, or 0.8%, of Hudson's total land area.

## Municipal Facilities and Other Government

Municipal facilities occupy 209 acres, or 1.11, of Hudson's total land area. "Other government" land use constitutes 17 acres, or 0.1% of Hudson's total land area.

## Recreation

Park/Recreation uses encompass about 373 acres of Hudson's total land area. Parks and recreation lands encompass about 2% of the developed land in the Town. There are both public and private park and recreation land uses. At times, this category overlaps with open space as well as municipal facilities. Further discussion of parks and recreation can be found in Chapter VIII, Community Facilities.

## Schools

Hudson offers five public schools and is home to several private schools/educational facilities. Schools occupy 211 acres or 1.13% of Hudson's total land area. For more information about schools, see the Community Facilities Chapter (Chapter VIII).

## Permanent Open Space

Open space is considered any land that is not developed and is protected in perpetuity through conservation easements or other restrictions. Open space land uses encompass about 1,893 acres, or 10.09%, of the total land area in Hudson. This is a nearly 900-acre increase from the 2006 Master Plan resulting from acquisitions by the Conservation Commission, conservation through Open Space Subdivisions by the Planning Board and other changes to classification.

## Current Use Land

NH RSA 79-A, enacted in 1973, authorized current use taxation of property. Administered by the NH Department of Revenue Administration, the current use program is designed to "prevent the loss of open space due to property taxation at values incompatible with open space usage. Open space land imposes few if any costs on local government and is therefore an economic benefit to its citizens. The means for encouraging the preservation of open space authorized by this chapter is the assessment of land value for property taxation on the basis of current use" (RSA 79-A:1). Parcels of fieldland, farmland and forestland of ten acres or more; "natural preserves" or wetlands of any size; and farmland generating more than \$2,500 annually are eligible for reduced property assessments under the program. Local officials must lower the assessed valuation of any property in the program to a prescribed level. When a parcel is removed from the program, the owner must pay a penalty (or "land-use change tax") equal to 10% of the land's fair market value.

In Hudson, 75% of this land-use change tax is allocated toward the purchase of land for conservation purposes; however, these taxes need to be spent within the year they are collected, or they are

transferred into the General Fund. According to the Hudson Assessing Department as of 2023, approximately 2,779 acres of land in Hudson is in current use, down from 3,100 acres in 2019.

## ANALYSIS OF UNDEVELOPED LAND

As of March 2020, approximately 2,387 acres of the total land area in Hudson remained undeveloped for various uses. This is a large decrease from the 5,330 acres of undeveloped land reported in the last master plan update in 2003.

A simple Buildout Analysis was conducted on this potentially developable land. A Buildout Analysis estimates the amount of developable land remaining in the Town and estimates the number of housing units and non-residential acres that could be developed. The Buildout Analysis considers issues of slope, wetlands, and 100-year floodplains as development constraints. Table VI-2 shows the results of this simple Buildout Analysis. The table shows the amount of developable land remaining in the Business, General, General-1, Industrial, Residential-1, Residential-1, and Town Residence Districts. The locations of these Zoning Districts are illustrated on Map VI-2.

**Table VI-3. Undeveloped and Developable Land by Zoning District, 2020**

Zoning	Total Acres	Undeveloped Acres	Constrained Acres	Developable Acres
Business	802.2	69.9	14.69	55.2
General	2717.6	336.8	88.79	248.0
General - 1	7073.9	1571.9	408.87	1163.1
Industrial	1153.0	46.7	19.3	27.4
Residential - 1	1625.6	4.4	0.2	4.2
Residential - 2	4427.7	338.2	125.9	212.3
Town Residence	968.8	19.0	6.57	12.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18768.8</b>	<b>2386.9</b>	<b>664.3</b>	<b>1722.6</b>

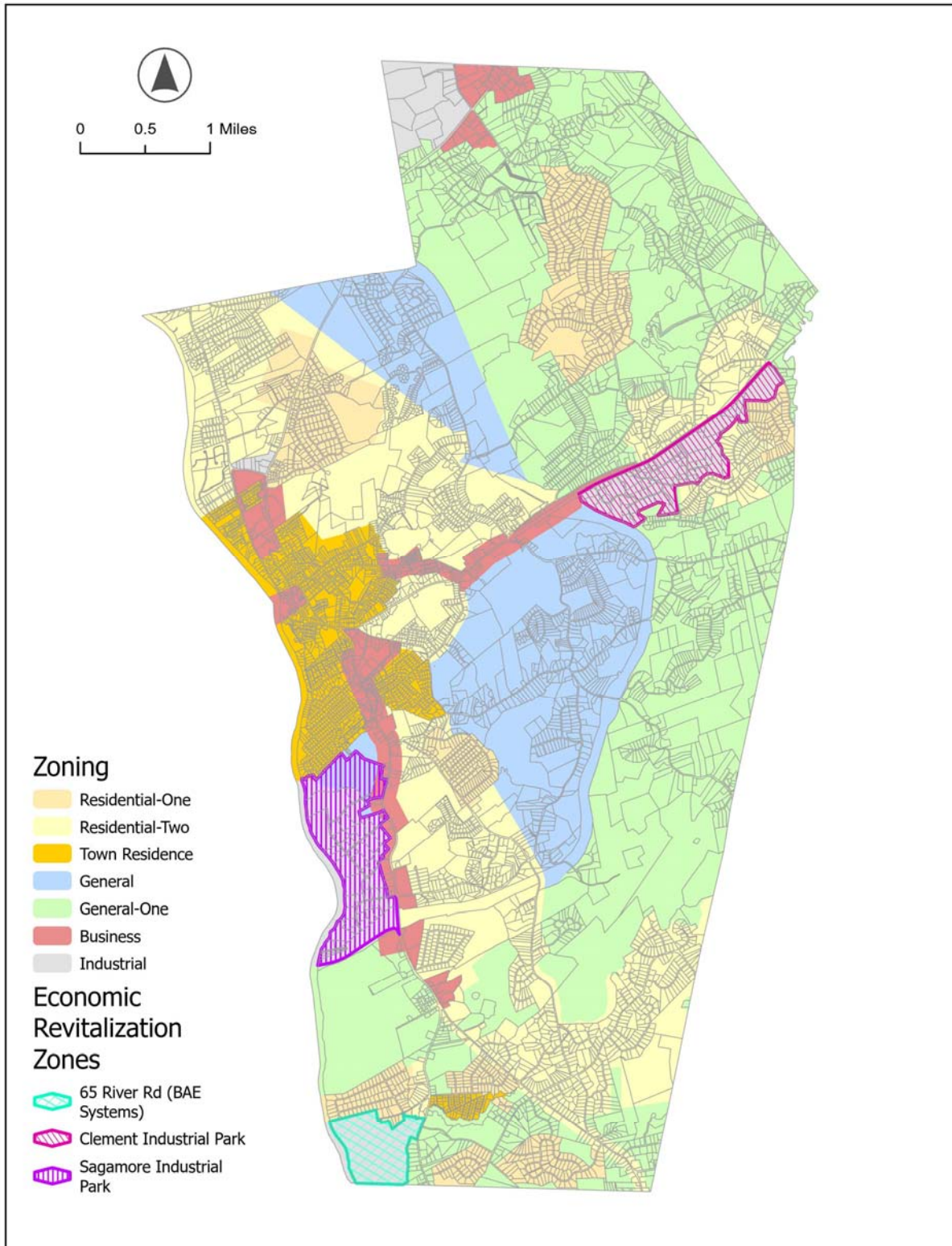
Source: NRPC GIS database, 2020.

The results of the buildout analysis indicate that, of the total 2,387 acres of undeveloped land remaining in Hudson, there are about 664 acres of constrained land. Constrained land is considered undevelopable due to the physical challenges it poses for development. This includes land that contains wetlands, 100-year floodplain, and/or steep slopes greater than 25%. After the constrained land is removed from consideration, approximately 1,723 acres throughout Hudson remain for future development.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The potential number of buildable lots presented in each district is based on zoning and does not necessarily reflect what is built.



Map VI-2. Zoning Districts in Hudson, 2023



The Residential-1 District has the smallest buildable area remaining in Hudson with only about 4.2 acres of developable land. Potentially, with water and sewer, an additional 6 single-family houses could be constructed on 30,000 square foot lots before the district is built out. Without water or sewer, 4 single-family houses could be constructed on 1-acre lots before the Residential-1 District is completely built out.

In the Residential-2 District, there are approximately 212.3 acres of developable land remaining. An additional 212 single-family homes can be constructed on 1-acre lots (with or without water and sewer) until buildout. Similarly, 154 duplexes could be constructed on 60,000 square foot lots without Town water or sewer.

With the exception of multi-family housing units, all types of residential development are allowed in the General District. There are approximately 248 acres of land developable in this district. The General District has a minimum lot area requirement of 1-acre with or without Town water and sewer, so an additional 248 single-family, two-family, or manufactured could be constructed until buildout. An additional 248 elderly housing units could be constructed if serviced by water and sewer.

In the General-1 District, all residential uses are permitted except for multifamily and elderly housing. Approximately 1,163 acres of land are considered developable in the General-1 District. Current zoning requires a minimum lot size of two acres, with and without town water and sewer. Potentially, an additional 581 single-family, two-family, or manufactured dwellings could be constructed in the General 1-District until buildout.

The Town Residence District has about 12.4 acres of developable land remaining. Because this District allows smaller lots sizes, there is a potential for an additional 54 new single-family house lots that can be built. Assisted living facilities and elderly housing developments are also permitted in this district, however elderly housing must be serviced by Town water and sewer.

Similarly, the remaining 55.2 acres of developable land within the Business District could potentially support 80 commercial lots serviced by Town water or sewer (30,000 square foot lots), or 55 commercial lots without Town water and sewer (1-acre lots).

Lastly, 27.4 acres are available for development within the Industrial District, with a potential for 39 industrial lots serviced by Town water and sewer (30,000 square foot lots), or 27 industrial lots without water or sewer (1-acre lots).

It should be noted that calculations for build-out presented above are based on the 2023 Zoning Ordinance and do not reflect what may actually be constructed in each District. In addition, the remaining residential land area is unlikely to develop at the exact density permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, given land constraints such as steep slopes and areas needed for roads, utilities, and/or open space, and density options for accessory dwelling units and housing for older persons. The estimates apply to future commercial and industrial developments, as it is likely that the average floor area ratio will increase as land values rise and redevelopment occurs. A more detailed buildout analysis may be useful as a planning tool to determine the full potential of the Town's land to accommodate future housing units and non-residential development.

## FUTURE LAND USE GOALS

Topics surrounding land use are inextricably woven into themes present in transportation, housing, natural resources and economic development. The following discussion of land use goals highlight areas of need discussed by the community during outreach activities and board meeting in recent years. Future decision making related to these topics should also consider the relationship and aligned goals of other chapters of the Master Plan.

### General Districts

The General and General-1 Districts allow a wide variety of residential, commercial and industrial uses.

The Zoning Ordinance describes the General District:

“The G District includes all areas not specifically designated as being within an R-1, R-2, TR, B or I District. The district is designed to permit a wide diversity of land uses. Most uses permitted in the other five districts are permitted in the G District. The G District is intended to allow natural constraints, such as infrastructure development and market forces to determine the most appropriate use of land. ***It is also intended that the G District will eventually be absorbed by the expansion of other existing districts or replaced by newly created districts.***”

And the Zoning Ordinance describes the General-1 District:

“The G-1 District includes all areas not specifically zoned as being within an R-1, R-2, TR, B, or I District located outside the right-of-way of the Circumferential Highway as depicted on the Town Zoning Map. The District is designed to permit a wide diversity of land uses at a density appropriate to the rural nature of the area, the natural constraints of the land and the lack of infrastructure. Uses permitted in this District are the same as those permitted in the G District.”

The General Districts have evolved since their establishment in 2001 much as described, directed by “natural constraints, such as infrastructure development and market forces to determine the most appropriate use of land.” It may be time for the Planning Board to consider that much of the land in these zones have matured as designed as intended to “eventually be absorbed by the expansion of other existing districts or replaced by newly created districts.”

Much of the land zoned either G or G-1 has developed as single-family and two-family residential, as shown on Map VI-1. This includes lands that stretch along the eastern side of the Town that are primarily accessed by collector and local, residential roadways. It may be appropriate to designate these lands as residential zones. On the other hand, some lands zoned G & G-1 have developed as commercial or industrial, particularly along arterials roadways and/or near other commercial or industrial zones and uses; these lands might be considered for rezoning as commercial or industrial. The Planning Board should carefully examine the lands currently zoned G & G-1 not as one piece, but as several different districts for future zoning efforts.

### Business Districts

The majority of the Business District was developed in the 1970’s through 1990’s with retail, automotive and restaurant uses typical of late 20th century strip development. Given the limited availability of undeveloped land and the relatively short design life of existing commercial buildings, there is opportunity for redevelopment in the next 20 years, especially along the aforementioned highway corridors. While there once were two different business districts, one associated with the central

business or village core area and one associated with highway-like areas, the two were collapsed into one business district circa 1994. Revisiting the concept of multiple different business districts with different uses and architectural character may assist in achieving a commercial landscape that is more diverse and sensitive to the desired character of the environs. For example, auto-oriented uses might be more appropriate in highway areas, while pedestrian-oriented uses may be a more appropriate development style for central business areas.

Current zoning permits a mix of multi-family and various commercial uses, in the Business District; however, existing development tends to be single use. Furthermore, the density requirements for multi-family housing could be discouraging traditional mixed-use development (currently, multifamily requires 53,560 square feet of buildable area for three units and an additional 5,000 square feet of buildable area for each additional unit). Parking requirements may also inhibit this type of development although the parking regulations do allow for the consideration of shared parking between uses.

An access management plan may assist with maintaining the capacity of the roadways and improving access for all modes of transportation. The plan should include best practices such as complete streets policies for vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian circulation, urban design; and stormwater management techniques such as Low Impact Development.

#### Revisiting District Boundaries

The boundaries of the Business Districts are worth examining for opportunities to clarify future development expectations in advancement of aesthetic character aspirations and to form a more cohesive, complete community. Some areas in Town that may not be zoned properly to meet community goals, and where rezoning should be considered. Also, many instances of split-zoned properties, make their land use prospects somewhat precarious, and often require a variance for any type of site development or use. Last, as mentioned above, it may be worth evaluating the current ubiquitous Business zone and consider breaking it into two or more different districts that responds to the variety of development patterns throughout Hudson.

There are areas in Town currently zoned Business that might be more appropriately zoned Residential. For example, there are well established residential neighborhoods that are partially zoned Business because they are within 500-feet of a State Road. This causes residents to seek variances anytime they wish to make a change to their property. Some examples of these areas are:

- Some areas along Webster Street between Elm Street & Ferry Street.
- Some parcels no on, but behind parcels fronting on Burnham Road.
- Some parcels in the vicinity of County Road.

Conversely, there are areas in Town currently zoned Residential or General that might be more appropriately zoned Business. Even further, there are some areas that have a mix of zoning designations but should be reconsidered as one district and parcels that are constrained from meeting their highest and best use due to being split-zoned.

#### Central Village Area Redevelopment

Business-zoned lands within the core area of Town may benefit from different dimensional standards than what exist today. These areas originally developed prior to the ubiquity of the automobile and as such, had a traditional look and feel commonly associated with New England. In some instances this character is retained, however both current zoning standards and development practices are more

aligned with auto-oriented site design. For example, large front yard setbacks push buildings away from the road, affecting architectural character as well as physical/visual separation from pedestrian ways. Other examples of these standards include high parking requirements; high lot size requirements for traditional mixed use development that includes residential uses; and allowance of auto-oriented site designs. New zoning standards, design guidelines and/or form-based code could help re-direct the character of these areas to be more cohesive with traditional New England town centers. These areas should: establish or re-establish pedestrian connections with abutting neighborhoods to reconstruct integrated, complete communities; and encourage smaller scale commercial, multi-family and/or mixed-use development.

### State Highway Retail Redevelopment

As existing retail development age, there may be opportunities to reshape the commercial character of the business districts through redevelopment. Redevelopment of commercial properties on Hudson's major state highways (NH 3A, 102, and 111) is a feasible alternative to expanding the Business District. Site development along these corridors should not be considered in isolation. There may be multiple opportunities for shared parking, shared access, façade improvements and mixed residential/retail/office uses as applications for redevelopment are received. Corridor property redevelopment is a specific example of how design standards might be effectively used by the Town and the private sector, working together. Village District Zoning, including overlay zoning, should be considered as a policy tool to incentivize redevelopment of tired retail sites.

Aside from the issue of design standards, the overall development standards by which existing properties were designed should be evaluated to determine their effectiveness and applicability. The Town might consider conducting a land use study of the commercial areas along each of the three state highways for the purpose of determining better configurations of parking and off-highway traffic circulation. These studies could also evaluate the appropriateness of the zone boundaries to match the zones with the actual land uses.

Similarly, pedestrian accessibility and safety in the state highway corridors in Hudson should be promoted. Although many people may still choose to use their vehicles, the lack of adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities leave people no alternative mode of transportation.

### Zoning & Regulatory Tools

Once defined, standards and character for future development in Business areas can be implemented through the use of a variety of zoning & regulatory policies which may include Form-Based Code, Village District Zoning, Overlay Districts, Design Guidelines and/or a combination thereof. For example, a mixed-use open space development overlay district could promote compact development with a mix of land uses, including residential, small-scale commercial, recreation and conservation within a neighborhood. Adopting a mixed-use open space overlay district may be a useful option for new development sites of a certain size and location where a new village style development would be appropriate. On the other hand, incentivizing the redevelopment of existing commercial areas could be implemented through new zoning standards, new districts or overlay districts. Through a combination of zoning ordinances and land use regulations, these examples could be based on the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND) and include elements of Form-Based Code (which brings greater emphasis to the massing, scale and architectural character), to achieve the community's aesthetic and character goals.

Design guidelines are different from regulations in that compliance would be encouraged rather than uniformly required, so private-property decision-making is respected; however, they are a good method to ensure that a business district or highway corridor is more than a collection of mismatched buildings and landscaped areas. Development of urban design guidelines for the Town of Hudson and amendments to the sign ordinance may assist in improving the aesthetics and function of the state highway corridors in Hudson. The Town might wish to consider adoption of urban design standards. Design standards are guidelines for private-sector property owners, to assist them in making decisions about how to develop or redevelop property in ways that make them compatible with neighboring land uses and in keeping with an overall conceptual framework and community character.

### Riverfront Opportunities

Up through the mid-20th Century, the typical American city or town with river frontage regarded its waterway as a transportation route and a convenient source of water and energy. The result was often an industrial/warehousing district – economically sound in its day, but hardly picturesque. More recently, as manufacturing has declined and the service-sector economy, especially tourism, has boomed, riverfront communities are discovering that waterways like the Merrimack

River are assets. There are many examples in New England of communities that have redeveloped their riverfronts with shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues that complement the river’s natural beauty.

A Merrimack Riverfront District is a concept that Hudson should consider. A specific plan should be created to promote this possibility in the Town, with recommendations that can be implemented through zoning and economic development initiatives, among other tools. Specific elements should include public access, as discussed previously, and a pedestrian-friendly access network.

### Open Space

A consistent focus in the Town of Hudson is the need to conserve the natural environment and open space, including forests, the remaining agricultural land, water bodies and wildlife. The view often expressed is that the natural environment must be protected to preserve the character and quality of life within Hudson. Yet some level of development is inevitable, and measures must be taken to facilitate reasonable development.

Conservation of open space protects air and water quality and wildlife habitat, and can preserve prime agricultural soils and other soils of importance. For all development, the use of buffers and integrated open space, with respect to environmental constraints, should be considered. The Town should strive to manage its present municipal lands by developing an open space plan that would include recommendations on the use of Town-owned parcels, priorities for acquiring privately held land from willing sellers/owners, and incentives for private landowners to voluntarily place conservation easements on their land. A main goal of the plan would be to develop a connected array of green spaces, for the benefit of both wildlife and Town residents; an example might be protecting additional land in the Musquash Swamp area along the Hudson and Pelham town-line. A concurrent goal of the Town should be to maximize the size of other connected open space areas for the purpose of conserving and preventing further fragmentation of wildlife habitat.

## Light Industrial/High Tech Opportunities

While the Town of Hudson is currently home to several high-tech, bio-tech and other cutting edge industries, policies to attract more of these business should be considered. Despite the perception that Hudson currently has adequate land zoned for commercial and industrial use, there are significant constraints on developing some of these properties, and as identified in the Economic Development chapter, there is high demand for industrial land in the region. Constraints include: difficult or sensitive environmental features, poor road access, and difficult or costly infrastructure (water and sewer) needs. Several tasks are necessary to address these constraints: 1) the Town should reexamine current parcel zoning to determine whether the constraints of the land necessitate rezoning as open space or low-intensity development; and 2) the Town should identify and properly zone land that lacks these constraints and whose highest and best use is commercial/industrial. 3) Identify barriers to redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing industrial properties. 4) Communicate with existing and potential employers in Hudson to identify their site selection needs such as available utilities. These tasks should run parallel with an examination of the zoning ordinance text so that zoning districts can be used to promote the desired light industrial mix.

## Recommendations

Participants in community outreach efforts indicated a desire for a balanced, planned approach to Hudson's land use development, with goals including:

- More open space conservation and protection in new developments.
- Focus commercial and industrial development within existing commercial/ industrial areas.
- Encourage reuse or redevelopment of existing commercial buildings and sites rather than on undeveloped land.
- Improve design standards landscaping, architecture, and site design.

In response to these goals, there are several land use strategies in pursuit of a balanced, livable, and economically sustainable community:

1. Examination of the lands currently zoned as General and General-1 for their suitability to be appropriately zoned to produce results expected and desired by the community. While much of these lands have organically developed residentially, other areas may be more suitable as commercial, business or light industrial zones. As part of this analysis, identify opportunities to create transition areas or buffer areas between incompatible land uses.
2. Create opportunity for growth within existing, developed commercial areas and other areas suitable for commercial activity by:
  - a. Reviewing the existing Business zone and consider re-establishing different types of Business Districts based on community character and their relationship with the development patterns they abut, for example town core areas versus auto-oriented areas.
  - b. Considering the development of a mixed-use, village district or overlay zone that incentivizes the redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing business areas and corridors.

- c. Design redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing business or retail areas that relate to the neighborhoods they enjoin through pedestrian connectivity, open spaces, landscape and architecture.
  - d. Enhancing opportunities for more desirable aesthetics and development types by implementing elements of form based code, or developing design guidelines and landscape standards that correspond to the desired character on a neighborhood or district basis.
  - e. Examine and potentially relocate district boundary lines of Business zone(s) considering the development history and context of existing uses.
3. Explore the potential for mixed-use development of areas of community enjoyment, leisure and entertainment that harnesses the unique and finite resource of riverfront property.
4. Develop an open space plan for current Town-owned land and priority areas that focuses on connectivity for wildlife and recreation as well as walkability within and between neighborhoods.
5. Identify development constraints and future utility and infrastructure needs of both existing businesses and burgeoning industries to identify opportunities to foster sustainable economic growth.